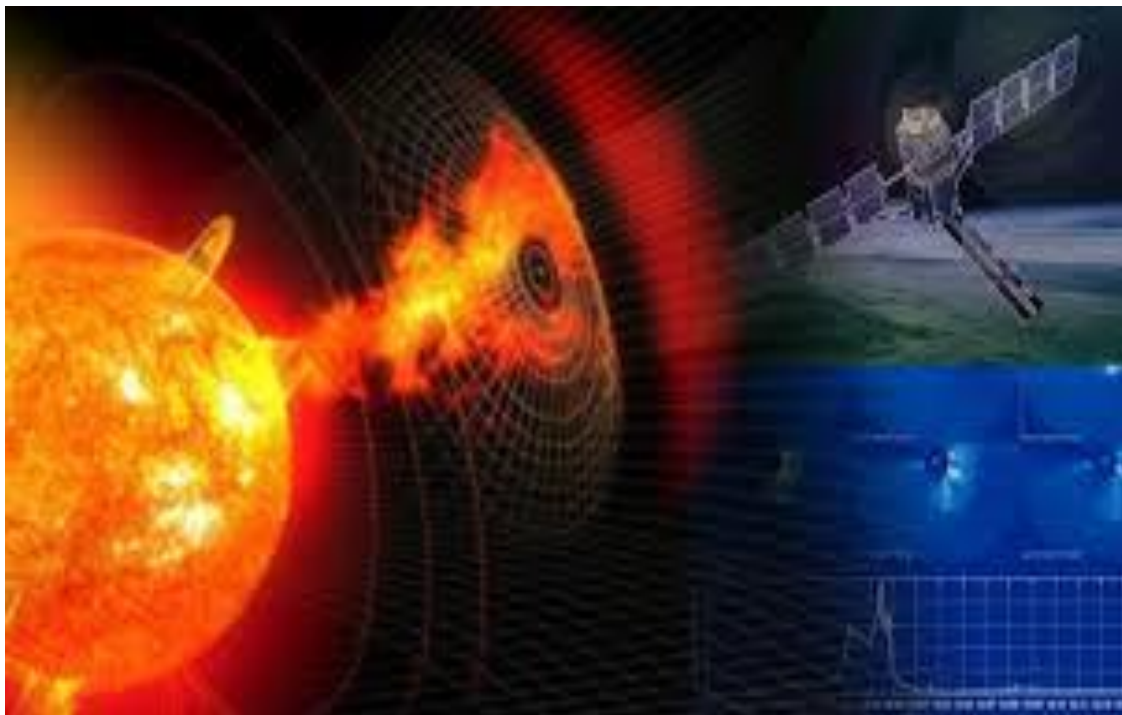


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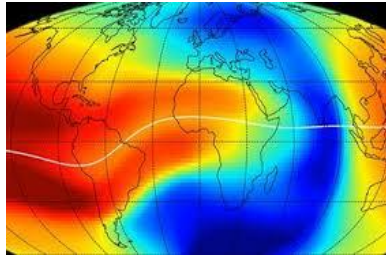


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EDITORIAL



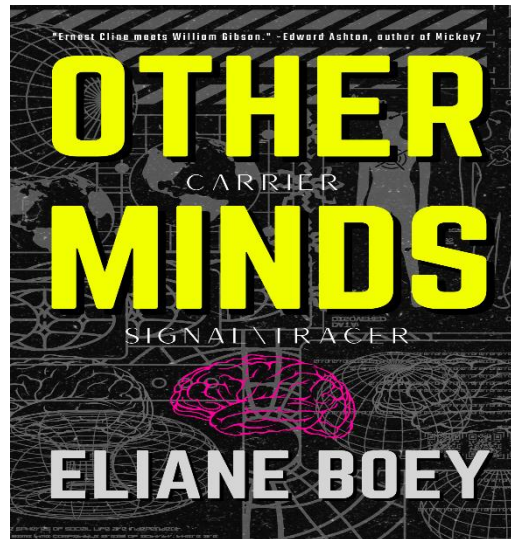
Something Must Be On My Mind

Not anything at all, but something G*O*O*D. Of course I am referencing what should be in my editorial. Clearly it should pertain to the bureau, or the subject of reader and writer relations. I am not hearing any objections to my wanting to see such relations improve, which means I have nothing to argue with, but perhaps there really isn't any material to the contrary. Actually objecting to better relations between the fen and the pros would be intrigue and subversion, or insurrection, the work of people who object to science fiction, or who, like espionage, are neutral to it, or it would be not understanding what is being considered and discussed. There are things which cause digressions to the purposes outlined here, and it's likely that what we're saying is not being fully understood. We've had disasters occur in science fiction fandom and we have not really gotten things together, so I'm still trying to get the bureau together, and I'd like to stress that I'm not trying to do anything else when I'm writing for this bureau. The bureau is not mechanically complex enough to fulfil its intentions, though its staff does work with what it's got. I can predict a fulfilled bureau, but I'm far from having one, though I'm leaving things open for people who might enter it with ideas for development, and Jean-Paul L. Garnier does seem to grasp what we're doing and to be working toward an understanding in the interviews he's been doing. I hope he keeps finding subjects for interviewing. I regard his interview in this issue as a breakthrough in an area of science fiction which has been obscure, though much heard from. In our staff, Jeffrey Redmond keeps propelling science fiction readers in the right direction, and he studies the makeup of things in and around science fiction, Heath Row maintains and strives to progress a substantial portion of science fiction fandom, and Jefferson Swycaffer keeps a watch on the working of things.

SF is in quite a mess in these times, and I think what we have to do here is make clear what it is we're doing, and working, ourselves, to get done what we ought to get done in the way it's supposed to be done. We lack a lot of roadmaps, but we ought to find, establish, and clarify these. We ought to conceive how fandom should be (and has been) and continue to operate along these lines, or start to do so.

And we ought to be interesting enough in the doing of this that people will read our writings.

INTERVIEW WITH ELAINE BOEY by Jean-Paul L. Garnier



Elaine Boey is a Chinese Singaporean writer of speculative fiction, and a member of the SF Writers of America, with stories in *Clarkesworld*, the *Penn Review*, *Weird Horror*, and others. Her first book, *OTHER MINDS*, was published on 5th September 2023 by DARK MATTER.

Elaine read Philosophy at the University of St. Andrews, and Interdisciplinary Humanities at New York University. She has a working knowledge of bulk cargo ships and ports, which continues to inspire her writing.

JPG: *OTHER MINDS* is a twin novella, what made you decide to debut with this format?

EB: I originally pitched just *CARRIER*, an SF horror novella, to DARK MATTER, as part of PitDark in October 2022. When Rob Carroll got back saying he'd like to publish it, we talked about building the book into something bigger. *SIGNAL TRACER*, a Cyberpunk mystery, was an obvious choice, because not only was I also trying to sell it at the time, but it dealt with the same themes of loss, nostalgia, and the construction of virtual and inner worlds. Both novellas also take place in the same Southeast Asian-centric near future world. So, it was easy to package them as a world built through two novellas.

JPG: You mention in the afterword that *Signal Tracer* began as a short story, what was your process like adapting a shorter work into longer form?

EB: I re-read the story for parts I'd wanted to expand, and things left unsaid. I colored in the world details. Downtown for one, and the satay street at night, are new details that I don't think were in the short story. There're many more. I also added Roy and Phoenix as new characters, along with the subplot that they bring! The Sailor is more a background presence and influence in the short story. The novella spends more time with the Sailor, and I could say that they're my favorite character. The Sailor is all things.

Carrier was also worked from a shorter form, although that earlier version of it was never published because Dark Matter responded before I got further with the short story. I pretty much did the same for it too. Both novellas were not plotted from short to longer form. I just "pantsed" them.

JPG: In these novellas there are two different worlds, both the external and the internal, or meatspace *versus* the virtual world—how did your worldbuilding process differ for these different facets of the books?

EB: So, in *Signal Tracer*, virtual world is the idealized lost past, and perfect reality. In *Carrier*, the character's own memory—both real events in her life as well as how she wishes they happened—are her perfect reality, without the intermediary of the virtual. In both cases, both are constructs for comfort. To shield the characters from what their reality has become. Both constructs, as with many creations, actually, are the internal externalized. Which means they are heavily colored by what the characters want to confront, and choose to believe. The virtual world of *Signal Tracer* therefore has more positive triggers, such as the gorgeous sunset in Lion City, the food. The companionable proximity with others. The same way that Ming Wen's memories in *Carrier* are heavy with gestures and looks, as she tries to find what she might have missed.

In contrast, the physical world of both stories don't dwell as much on the sensory details, and just allow the plot to take control. The present is characterized and built more on the character's immediate emotions and reactions.

JPG: I have found that cyberpunk often utilizes grammar in a different way than other forms of SF and is at times more terse; how did you play with grammar as part of your worldbuilding and setting?

EB: I think it's possible that cyberpunk uses noticeably shorter sentences in some points, when it can't be indulging in long paragraph sentences! But yes, it can be less lyric, and more urgent. This could be because cyberpunk has inherited from the noir tradition. The same displacement and confrontation with the no longer familiar, that is drawn through choppy sentences, written in a terse stream of consciousness that mimics the feeling of grasping, lost.

Further on tenses, *Carrier* was originally written with far more changes of tense, through past and present. This is something that we simplified in the final edit, hopefully to avoid confusion.

JPG: *Carrier* used a form of non-linearity for emotional affect. How and why did you use this technique?

EB: I wanted the narrative of *Carrier* to recreate the experience and structure of dream-like state. Nightmare-like actually, where the reader almost cannot tell the difference between what's really happening and what's within Ming Wen's mind. Particularly as she keeps returning to her memories to pull them apart for where she did wrong, and replays them not only as they were to her, but as she wished they'd happened. I've admired how it was done in the great novels like *THE HAUNTING OF HILL HOUSE* and *SPHERE*. I hope I finished close enough!

JPG: *SIGNAL TRACER* gives a nod to Gogol in one of the chapter titles, and in ways uses a similar plot device—was this intentional, and if so, how did you find *DEAD SOULS* inspiring?

EB: So glad you picked up on that! In *Dead Souls*, an upstart swindler buys the names of dead serfs to inflate the value of his land, which he plans to mortgage. There's a lot more to the novel, but that was what got me thinking of things like electoral fraud—specifically buying votes—as well as corporate acquisitions, some involving questionable valuation. Without giving too much of the story away, that's part of the inspiration for the trigger event in *Signal Tracer*.

JPG: One of the themes in the novellas is a retreat to the digital realm as things on the outside worsen. What warnings and advantages do you think are meaningful for a culture that increasingly does this?

EB: Both novellas present nostalgia as a retreat from an unbearable reality that the characters feel powerless to change. I wanted to present nostalgia as the new drug, all the more intoxicating in Lion City for instance, because with the enhancements and filters in the novella come creative license.

Nevertheless the problem that the novellas present in that indulgence in nostalgia is often more than harmless aesthetics, and can be a sign of yearning for lost better, "simpler" times, a sign of rising conservatism which doesn't always accurately remember the past as it was, and for its context and flaws. Nostalgia can also be a sign of wishing you could do things over again, and put "back in the box" a lot of messiness, complexities and problems of modern life that we are responsible for bringing into our current reality. Both of the society at large and in our own lives. Indulging in nostalgia won't address and correct any of that, it's at best

temporary relief. And the characters of both novellas will have to come to terms with that, before they can effect any change in their lives.

JPG: In *CARRIER*, the spaceship is one of the main characters. How did the process of using a part of the setting for characterization work for you?

EB: I'm not normally heavy on world-building in my stories, and I love it when the setting becomes a character. I think my plots are pretty linear and simple. In *Carrier*, Ming Wen builds the ship, but then the ship builds itself around her. It traps her, in her memories and mistakes. I loved building the ship through the narrative to intrude, aggressively, on her thoughts and plans, reminding her of her arrogance in over-estimating what she could build. And remind her, as well, of her own responsibility, in the way that she chooses to interpret each message and gesture from her mentor Kun Chun, her counterpart Ren Ci, and her daughter Cora.

In essence, *Carrier* is a story about loss and recapturing happiness through construction. It is also about ambition and pride, and how the machines we attempt to build—and the people we claim to love but try to change—expose our own insecurities.

JPG: What are you currently working on and what's coming up next for you?

EB: I'm deep in developmental edits for *CLUB CONTANGO*. It's the first of my speculative novels to be published, and it'll be out with *DARK MATTER INK* in November 2024. At the moment I'm just pulling it apart and making the plot make sense. *Club Contango* is about a single mom who runs an illegal micro-casino on an asteroid station, who discovers the dead body of her former associate just as she finds out an unhappy effect of the fine print on an old AI training job she did in unfolds in 2080, in the same world, and bridging the gap between *Carrier* (2086) and *Signal Tracer* (2050) in the *Tracer* timeline.

I'm also querying another speculative novel, one that's perched on the cusp of the year 3000 in the same world, which I'd describe as *AD ASTRA* meets *COURAGE UNDER FIRE*.

Learn more at <https://www.elaineboey.com/>

Get your copy of *OTHER MINDS* at <https://bookshop.org/a/197/9781958598191>

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS: The Issue in Retrospect



The interview this issue seems to me to be a crucial one in the identification and investigation of the corner of science fiction known as Cyberpunk. It seems to me that cyberpunk writing derives considerably from Dadaism, as well as the Noir that Elaine Boey mentions. Dada originated largely in Europe, and was a reaction to the speed and chaos that were coming in with the 20th Century—world wars, steam engines, motorized individual vehicles, radio transmissions, recorded music, television and movies. Mass production helped speed up these developments. Dada art, music and writing reflected and reacted to it, and was considered comparably revolutionary. Dada is, like surrealism, of the nature of fantasy, and with Dada it's horror too. It, Pataphysics and Futurism all related to science fiction without being science fiction, but the similarity probably

caught the attention of fans and these writing and art forms may thereby have been melded into the science fiction area and crept into the art and writing. If so it is at least interesting. Dada is psychological and I see mention in the interview of psychological matters and the inner and outer experiences, which seem to be trends she is following and developing. This would make the reading of this form of sf more interesting. There is a lot of discussion in science fiction of inward and outer reality and I think it is a trend which science fiction is taking.

By the way, this look at women writers we're presently giving shows quite a turnover in what is being written.

Jean-Paul Garnier—no first name for Gogol?

I'd like to see more science fiction of a psychological nature get started up. That might get people talking, too.